DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 063 CS 507 665

AUTHOR Henning-Stout, Mary
TITLE Gender Issues in Training: Voices at the Margins of School Psychology.
PUB DATE 19 Aug 91
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (99th, San Francisco, CA, August 16-20, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Processes; Cultural Context; *Females; *Graduate Students; Higher Education; *Humanistic Education; Language Role; *Nontraditional Students; Sex Differences; *Social Psychology; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS Academic Community; *Academic Discourse; Psychological Gender

ABSTRACT

The entry of more "non-traditional" students into graduate social psychology programs brings varied life experiences into the field. Women in particular bring different experiences than those conventionally assumed by the academy. Research shows that many women who have succeeded in higher education did so by adopting "separate" knowing, which approaches knowledge as something that can be objectified and reduced to understandable parts. By contrast, "connected knowing" involves making sense of reality by examining experience in the context of relationships. Connected knowers often feel estranged from the academic world. Women's ways of being are strange to academia. Women often make their thinking public early in the process of forming ideas, and tend to view knowledge as dynamic, and use more tentative, less authoritative speech. Women are quick to assume collective knowledge, which can minimize any unique knowledge they may possess. While women are in the majority in graduate programs, they are less likely than men to pursue academic careers. Trainers must be aware of policies, practices, and curricula that may systematically exclude many qualified students and faculty from program participation. A number of options for addressing these circumstances are available. (SG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Gender Issues In Training:
Voices at the Margins of School Psychology

ED340063

CS507665

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary Henning-Stout

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Gender Issues In Training:
Voices at the Margins of School Psychology

Mary Henning-Stout
Lewis & Clark College

In Robert Munsch's (1980) story, The Paper Bag Princess, Princess Elizabeth outsmarts a firebreathing castle-eating dragon to save her fiance, the captured Prince Ronald. When she arrives in the room where Ronald has been captive, he takes one look at her clothing (a paper bag which was all she could find after the dragon ate her castle and snagged the prince) and tells her to come back when she looks like a real princess. To that Elizabeth responds, "Ronald, your clothes are really pretty and your hair is all neat. You look like a real prince, but you're a bum." And they didn't get married after all.

If the plot in this story is shifted slightly, it can be retold as a reflection of what happens with many women who enter and leave the academic world of school psychology. Like Elizabeth, women in advanced graduate training may use unfamiliar approaches to overcoming the "dragon" of degree requirements. The women who are most successful in the eyes of the program are successful in speaking the language and behaving in the ways recognized as academic and scholarly. Women who do not make it in academic programs may fail because of their refusal of or unfamiliarity with this language and behavior; because they do not fight dragons in accepted ways, but; more importantly, because they do not look like real scholars.

Drawing the analogy between Elizabeth and women who are students and faculty in school psychology is possible based on evidence from the survey research presented today and on evidence from the larger literature on the lives of women in academia. My part in this symposium is to expand upon the findings of my co-presenters by relating conclusions from some of the other work on women's lives in the academy. My purpose is to invite discussion and consideration of the issues raised and their relevance to the training of school psychologists.

Students in School Psychology

The papers presented by Deborah, Karen, Marilyn, & Dan give us some evidence of what students' lives are like in school psychology training programs. They have highlighted key considerations as reflected in the students' own responses to items on questionnaires. This is a powerful beginning to understanding not only the lives of women, but the lives of all students as they stretch to include graduate study.

The entry of more "non-traditional" students (the term for people who have been in the world for a while since college) into graduate training programs has carried a big reminder that no student enters into training in school psychology "Tabula Rasa". Many students, women in particular, bring different life experiences than those conventionally assumed by the academy.

The Larger Lives of Students

One challenge to trainers of school psychologists is to extend our thinking about healthy family systems to our policy and practice regarding graduate students. In addition to bringing varied life experiences to their training (experiences that frequently enrich and extend the ideas of our profession in unanticipated ways), women and men who are active in their families find

---

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, August 19, 1991.

CS507665

themselves thoroughly devoted to two roles: student and family member. It is important that trainers act on the knowledge that healthy individuals are more than what they do professionally and that this diversity contributes to the strength of what an individual can know and do when the balance is respected. Although they still exist, the number of families is decreasing in which one person pursues a career and the other tends to the family and maintains the household. Few people in general, and almost no women are graduate students with the luxury of a "wife" to take care of everything else while they concentrate on their studies.

At the meeting of the National Council of Schools of Professional Psychology (NCSPP) this Spring, the focus was on the "glass ceiling"--the features of professional training and employment that stand as barriers to advancement for women in particular. The considerations of women and men who have family responsibilities were central in this discussion. A practical initiative emerging from the conference has been a search for and promotion of half-time internships. Jim Campbell, chair of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students was quoted in the Monitor article summarizing this conference (Moses, 1991, April) as describing the work his group is doing with APA and APIC to develop half-time internship opportunities, "It's something that we feel is very important, especially for older students, for students who have children.".

A companion issue for graduate training is the residency requirement. There is merit to the notion that students need time to reflect on the theory, the ideas, and the possibilities of psychology in schools. There is value in setting aside time for students to become acquainted with professors and the profession itself as represented in organizations like Division 16. The tradition has been to define "time for reflection" in terms of full-time residency expectations. This traditional conceptualization of academic residency may be too narrow--it may restrict access to training programs for people with lives beyond school.

Different Ways of Knowing

In addition to bringing life experiences and demands that are less familiar to traditional academic programs, many women come to higher education with ways of constructing knowledge that are foreign to the traditions of that setting. In their book, Women's Ways of Knowing, Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1986) report their findings on how the 135 women they interviewed (90 were students) made meaning in their lives. They found five discernable "voices". These voices ranged from silence to the voice of constructed knowledge out of which women spoke with recognition of the social and individual construction of knowledge. The voice which seemed common among women estranged from higher education they called "connected knowing". The voice they found most often among women who were succeeding in academia was that of "separate knowing."

Consistent with Perry's findings about the development of knowledge among college men, Belenky and her colleagues found that the most successful women in higher education were those who had come to think procedurally--to know that some ways of understanding and approaching problems were better than others. However, they found that this procedural knowing seemed to be of two types: separate and connected. Separate knowers spoke of knowledge as something one could objectify and reduce to understandable parts. These women were more likely to approach academic problems from an objective posture, as dispassionate observers able to isolate and describe the subjects of their academic concern. Intrestingly, many of these women indicated that, in adopting this approach to knowing, they felt as if they were functioning in a foreign culture. They were acting the parts that were deigned legitimate by the

people they respected as scholars, but felt they were not always speaking from themselves.

Other women chose to leave academia because they felt they would only fail in this system they did not understand. They too were procedural knowers but applied what Belenky et al. called "connected" knowing. These women made sense of their experience in the context of the relationships involved. They were unlikely to join in debates or to take issue with anything a professor or other student would say and, instead, worked to understand how it was the other person was thinking. One professor tells of coming into an undergraduate class made up of women and making a controversial statement. He then urged the students to take issue with him, to challenge his point (Gorra, 1988). Instead, they asked questions about how he came to believe this thing. It was as if they were willing to enter into discussion assuming, for the time, that what he had said was true. They did not look for what was wrong with his statement and, instead looked for indications of how he had come to the belief he presented (Clinchy, 1990).

Connected knowing appears passive and weak. Connected knowers seem to be selling their own ideas short, but this is not necessarily the case. They are gathering their information in a way that is quite foreign to traditional academic settings, but no less effective and no less rigorous. However, because this way of knowing is so foreign and because it may not be understood by either the teacher or the student, women who construct knowledge in this way may find little avenue for success in academic programs.

As trainers and students of school psychology, we can learn from the findings of Belenky and her colleagues. We can watch for unfamiliar ways of getting to knowledge and, instead of consistently squelching or redirecting the knower to the more familiar path of separate knowing, we can encourage the process and allow ourselves to understand how the connected knower is coming to her or his conclusions.

The ability to construct knowledge in a more separate fashion is valuable for any scholar or professional. We teach well to that way of knowing--we encorage its development. The value of objective procedural approaches to understanding is not at issue here. What is at issue is the lack of credibility given to connected knowing, a way of knowing that is equally as legitimate as separate knowing--a way of knowing I argue as central to the successful practice of consultation in schools, for example. Yet, connected knowing remains foreign and unrecognized (if not actively discouraged) in most academic programs.

Feminine Style in Academic Settings

Along with these ways of knowing, women's ways of being are also strange in the world of academia. They are unaccustomed and deviant. Some brief examples from extensive work by Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington (1988) provide illustration. In their interviews with women in academia (faculty and advanced graduate students), they learned the following:

-Women in academic positions tended to make their thinking public early in the process of formulating ideas. Their colleagues interpreted such presentations as lacking rigor and credibility and were disinclined to take these women's thoughts seriously.

-Women tended to see knowledge as dynamic and to use more conditional and tentative speech rather than the more accustomed authoritative voice.

-Women were quick to assume collective knowledge with the result being minimization of any unique

knowledge they might have. This often resulted in their ideas being attributed to others who had taken more assertive stances on a given issue (and had used more authoritative voice).

In addition to Aisenberg and Harrington's findings, there is increasing illustration of the comfort women have with "being in process". In a book on the management styles of five women CEOs, Sally Helgesen (1990) concludes that women are more comfortable and effective in the middle of long and unsure progress toward goals than are men. With the five women she studied, there was consistent evidence that, while the products were important, these women were every bit as comfortable and engaged in the small steps between products; a comfort she did not observe in their male counterparts. Helgesen's attribution is to the socialization and history women inherit which puts them in repeated positions (like child rearing) of contributing to the process without ever really knowing a product.

In a similar vein, Mary Catherine Batesor (1990) writes of five women whose quite successful lives have been characterized by discontinuity. One common theme across their lives is radical changes in their careers because of the need to adapt to family circumstances. Each of these women moved forward in her life by what Bateson describes as improvisation, always drawing on many diverse parts of her life to construct her next career move. Underlying Bateson's account of these lives are the themes of "work in process", a theme echoing Helgesen's findings, and of "interdependence": The interdependence of work and family, of one academic discipline and another, of the advancement of knowledge and the wellbeing of the planet.

In her experience as the academic dean of Amherst College, Bateson learned that the value on women who composed their lives in this patchwork fashion was low. She saw women denied tenure and promotion because they had not lived up to the promise they showed in graduate school. They had taught courses outside their disciplines and volunteered for service work within the college. These activities had cut into their scholarly work. Bateson saw women coming to academia with a tendency to appreciate and act upon interdependence, to pursue scholarship extending beyond the specialized disciplines in which they had earned their advanced degrees. She saw women who did not speak the language of their male colleagues become worn down in their isolation, several choosing not to pursue tenure when the opportunity came, claiming fatigue and unwillingness to continue in an organization in which their contributions were devalued.

Bateson's was perhaps an extreme situation; however, her observations are worth heeding. The situation she descirbes at Amherst is not one from which creative scholarship by women faculty and students would be likely to emerge.

Participation From the Margins

The expressed feelings of women in academic settings consistently indicate their sense of being on someone else's turf. As Marilyn and Dan have indicated, 65% of the students completing doctoral programs in school psychology are women. These women are not as likely as their male colleagues, however, to pursue academic careers. In his last "President's Message" in the Division 16 newsletter, Roy Martin (1991, Summer) quoted one student as saying "who needs all this stress for so little reward; I can find other things to do." We don't know whether the person Roy quoted was a woman or a man (although the chances, given Marilyn and Dan's data, are good it was a woman). Roy's focus was on the poor financial rewards and extrodinary requirements of academic life. When you add in the fact of being a woman to the mix of making a decision about

pursuing an academic career, you add in the problem of being a person who would, if hired, be automatically on the margin.

Women entering faculty life in the United States are entering the place where much of the recognized knowledge of our culture has been authored. Although women are increasingly present in academia, the authors of the established knowledge upon which current scholarship is based have been primarily white European-American males. And the authors of knowledge have been the fathers of academic tradition in all of its manifestations.

Women entering as graduate students are choosing a short stint in this setting. These women have likely mastered what Belenky and her colleagues call "separate" knowing. One of the questions that naturally emerges from these observations is, who is left out--who doesn't pursue graduate study because she doesn't think in the accepted academic fashion? Women who experience academic life as a place where they are outsiders might be more likely than men, who fit more readily into the system, to choose careers outside of that system--to head for the sunset with Elizabeth. The cost to the profession and, ultimately, to the children, in creative professionals and scholars may be very great.

Challenges for Trainers

What this means for trainers is that we must heighten our awareness of the policies, practices, and curricula we have in place that may systematically exclude a large portion of qualified students (and faculty) from participation in our programs. When a student, woman or man, does not have the language, does not know the rules, and sees the world of children and human behavior differently from the people setting the definitions through research and curriculua, that student may either adopt the behaviors and beliefs of those setting the rules, or leave the program. These are immediate concerns not only to a profession struggling to provide the practitioners needed by the schools in our country, but for a profession committed to serving the needs of children in the best ways possible.

Patricia Schmuck (1987), a professor and scholar in educational administration has considered the stages a professional organization goes through in the process of including women. She identifies five stages, presented here with some modification:

1. Exclusionary Thinking: The organization functions as if the experiences, thoughts, and behaviors of men are the same as those of women.
2. Compensatory Thinking: The women who are acknowledged are those who manifest the same behaviors and similar thoughts to those valued by the men in the organization.
3. Medical Thinking: Whether socialized or genetic, women are inferior to men in intelligence and leadership ability and will only be equal when trained to the levels and to fit the roles established by men.
4. Ecological Thinking: The organizational system mediates against the inclusion of women. Equality will be acheived with changes in institutional structures and procedures.
5. Inclusive/Constructivist Thinking: The experiences, thoughts, and behaviors of women are seen as valuable. Women and men join efforts and perspectives to construct increasingly responsive organizations.

The profession of school psychology can be described as fitting any of these stages depending upon the training program or organization of focus. Locating our profession within this scheme is not as important as articulating the "places" our individual organizations might fall. In this list, the words "women" and "men" could be replaced with names of any marginalized and privileged groups (try "people of color" and "European-Americans", or "the poor" and "the wealthy", or "children" and "adults"). The point for us as trainers of school psychologists is to take careful note of the ways we encourage and heed the voices or our students, potential students, and colleagues and the way we discount or ignore those voices.

In an attempt to come out of more constructivist thinking, I offer several options for faculty response to these issues:

1. In a discipline drawing primarily women we need women mentors and men who are aware and respectful of the different lives from which women come to graduate training.
   Corollary 1: We must recognize, appreciate, and compensate the overwork on the part of current women faculty who provide more than their share of advising given their disproportionate representation relative to the numbers of women who are graduate students.
   Corrolary 2: The social experiences of men who are graduate students may be affected by their minority status, with some feeling excluded socially. When the programs model more inclusive/constructivist thinking and practice, the alienation of students from one another on the basis of gender will give way to collaboration and mutual respect.
2. We can find creative ways to provide the benefits of residency without requiring students to be out of the rest of their lives for a large hunk of time. Women and men who care for families and children are placed in extrodinary stress with such requirements.
3. For reasons similar to those bearing on residency requirements, we can join NCSPP and APAGS in actively prusuing and facilitating part- or half-time internships.
4. In academic and clinical courses, faculty can recognize, address, model, and encourage alternative ways of knowing. Approaches to scholarship by students and faculty representing connected knowing can be recognized and rewarded.
5. Opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration can be pursued within academic institutions and among public and private organizations serving children (especially practicum and internship sites). The value of recognizing and acting on this interdependence can be emphasized.
6. Faculty can consider ways in which they as individual advisors and as a collective unit can monitor their thinking about women or any

other group outside the dominant culture of their program. Forging working relationships with students in the effort to move through the stages can enhance the process.

Actions like these on the part of trainers of school psychologists can have the ultimate effect of moving the profession toward engaging students and colleagues like Princess Elizabeth in an ongoing dialogue about ways to train and practice school psychology. Instead of telling her she needs to look more like our version of a school psychologist, student, or academic, the provession through the actions of its members can recognize the contributions she can make with her unfamiliar approach to hostile dragons. Adding new voices is not a threat to the integrity of our profession. Adding voices affords the collective construction of richer and more responsive knowledge.

References

Aisenberg, Nadya & Harrington, Mona. (1988). Women of academe: Outsiders in the sacred grove. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Bateson, Mary Catherine. (1990). Composing a life: Life as work in progress. New York: Plume.

Belenky, Mary F., Clinchy, Blythe M., Goldberger, Nancy, R., & Tarule, Jill M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind. New York: Basic.

Clinchy, Blythe. (1990). Issues of gender in teaching and learning. Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 1, 52-67.

Gorra, Michael. (1988, May 1). Learning to hear the small, soft voices. The New York Times Sunday Magazine, pp. 32,34.

Helgesen, Sally. (1990). The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership. New York: Doubleday.

Martin, Roy M. (1991, Summer). Storm clouds over school psychology. The School Psychologist, 45(3), 1-2.

Moses, Susan. (1991, April). Breaking through the glass ceiling. APA Monitor, pp. 36-37.

Munsch, Robert. (1980). The paper bag princess. Toronto: Annick Press.

Schmuck, Patricia. (1987). Women educators: Employees of schools in western America. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.